

15 things to check when on a viewing



Viewing a property? Here's what you need to watch out for

Remember, any structural problems doesn't mean the property is a no-go. No house is perfect. What's important is that anything you're a bit worried about is looked at by a qualified surveyor.

1. Try and spot the signs of damp

Damp is a big consideration, especially with older buildings. Check for bubbles in the wallpaper, mould on the ceilings, or rotting window frames. All of these are signs of damp, and could damage the property long term (as well as make it miserable to live in).

If you can't spot anything, follow your nose – damp leaves a very distinct, musty smell. And watch out for any recent repainting that doesn't match the rest of the house. It could be an attempt to cover up recent damp patches.

2. Check the electrics

Where are the plug sockets, where are they placed, and what kind of condition are they in?

Old electrics may eventually need replacing and this could be expensive, so make sure you know whether the wiring in the house is up to scratch.

3. Keep an ear out for noise from neighbours

Pay close attention to any walls or ceilings you might share with your neighbours. If there's a TV or radio playing while you're viewing the property, ask for it to be switched off – it could be hiding noise from nextdoor.

Visit at different times of the day, if you get the chance. The student flat below may be pretty quiet at 9am on a Monday, but there could be plenty of noise come Friday night.

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4. Listen for traffic noise

It's not just the neighbours you need to think about – transport noise can be just as noticeable in a property. It doesn't have to be road traffic either; rail lines and flight paths are all worth thinking about.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (also known as DEFRA) have produced traffic noise maps for big parts of the country. Just enter the property's postcode to see how noisy an area is.

5. Look for nearby pubs and bars

Research the nearby area before you go to a viewing, and if there's a pub or bar nearby, pop in. It's a good chance to get a real feel for the area and soak up the atmosphere.

If you're looking in an area that's packed with nightlife, consider putting the postcode into [Police.gov.uk](https://www.police.gov.uk). You'll be able to see if there's been any incidents recently.

6. Check the roof

Get outside and take a look at the roof. Does it look old and in need of repair, or is it in good condition? Roof repair is a big, expensive job, and not something a bit of DIY can fix.

Keep an eye on the chimney too. Does it look off-centre? If so, it may need repointing in future, which is another expensive job.

7. Find out what direction the house faces

Finding out if a property gets the sun can mean the difference between a home that's warm and bright, or one that's always a bit dingy. Are there any big trees, and how close are they to the house? What about your neighbours' fences? You may have an amazing south facing garden, but you might never see it.

The Sun Surveyor app uses a 3D compass to predict where the sun will be at various times of day, so even if your estate agent is adamant the garden is sunny and south facing, it's best to be sure. **Download the free version onto your Android or iPhone.**

8. Check phone signal

When you first arrive, check your signal. And if there's anyone else with you on the viewing, try and ring them. There's nothing worse than realising your new home is a black hole of phone signal. It's no fun having to nip to the upstairs bathroom every time you need to ring someone.

If you want to get really thorough, check out the [Opensignal app](#) (available to download on Android or iPhone). Opensignal also does the very good job of letting you know which mobile phone providers are the best for your area.

If there's no signal nearby, don't give up hope. Some mobile phone providers do sell devices that work with your broadband to give you 3G signal.

9. Scout out storage space

Get a feel for how much storage space is in a property. Check under the stairs, the garage, and any big cupboards.

These all add up and save you having to do a big clear out before you move.

10. Find out if your furniture fits

A room may look large with someone else's furniture in it, but what about yours? Consider measuring your beds, tables and wardrobes before you go on a viewing. You don't want to have to swap that king size for a double.

11. Ask to see the loft

If you're feeling brave, ask the estate agent if you can poke your head upstairs into the loft, but be very careful when you're climbing up there.

See how the roof has been built and whether a conversion is possible. And make sure to check if there's any insulation. A lot of heat is lost through the roof of a house, so it'll be good to know if your property is energy efficient.

12. Watch out for cracks

Don't panic if you see any small, hairline cracks – these appear in old and new builds, and can just be a sign of the house settling.

If you do spot any large ones, look a bit closer and see if they're affecting a major part of the structure. It's something that may need to be looked at by a professional surveyor later on.

13. Check the plumbing

Turn on a tap. Is it a steady stream, or a dribble? The same goes for the shower – check the water pressure and how long it takes to heat up. A property may be amazing, but if the shower's a bit weak you'll regret it every single morning. Factor in the cost of replacement if you definitely can't live without a decent shower to start your day.

14. Test the heating

Turn the heating on, and see how long everything takes to warm up. Next, find out when the boiler was installed, when it was last serviced, and if there's a warranty that comes with it. Older boilers will eventually need replacing, so bear that in mind.

Check what kind of boiler it is – if it's a combi boiler, it'll mean instant hot water and energy efficiency. If not, there's a water tank and maybe higher running costs to think about.

15. Look at the neighbours

Keep a close eye on the condition of nearby properties, as it can tell you a lot about your neighbours. Does the property look well maintained, or is it a bit of a mess?

Remember, these could be your new neighbours, and you don't want to be looking at a front garden full of rubbish every morning.

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